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COUNCIL Update

ONTARIO ADVISORY COUNCIL ON WOMEN'S ISSUES

AUGUST 1990



66% of MPPs Reply to Council's Questions on Violence

In our last newsletter, we published our letter sent on January 18 to Premier Peterson. The same letter also went directly to the constituency office of all Ontario MPPs. This letter raised questions about the physical, emotional and economic violence endured by women in Ontario and asked each MPP to respond personally to these issues. A second letter was sent on May 22 to the legislative office of those who had not replied. We promised to report on who responded and what they said.

In total, 85 MPPs out of a total of 129 (there is one vacant seat), or just over 66% responded to Council's letter. More were still trickling in at press time.

In general, the quality of responses was quite poor. We wanted to know what each MPP, regardless of party affiliation, would do on a personal level to try and change things. What we got mostly, was the Liberals boasting about their tremendous achievements and the other two parties bashing the Liberals for their poor record.

Interestingly, the **Conservatives** had the highest response level. They have 17 representatives in the house, and 13 or 76% responded.

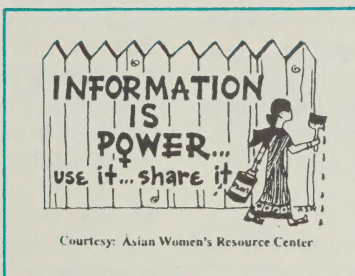
The **NDP** were very close behind. Fourteen of the 19 NDPers replied - 74%.

The **Liberals** came in a scant third. The party in power with 93 seats sent back only 52 replies. Several Cabinet ministers did not reply. On an individual level, it was encouraging that 12 of the 16 female Liberal MPPs did reply.

What The Liberals Said

Overall, the Liberals' response was the most disappointing. Over half, or 29 of them chose

not to give any personal response. Instead, they sent a form letter stating that Mavis Wilson, Minister Responsible for Women's Issues, would answer for them. Not one personal word graced any of these 29 letters.



Some Liberals did send personal and thoughtful responses to our questions, explaining what they had done, or were planning to do in their own areas on a local level. These are to be commended for their initiative and most importantly, their awareness of these issues. (See **Laurels**, page 3).

The replies forwarded by **Mavis Wilson**, Minister for Women's Issues and **Premier David Peterson** reiterated Liberal government programs. They made reference to the \$28.8 million committed over five years to address sexual

violence against women. They cited Ontario's pay equity legislation and pointed out that it applies to 78% of the 2.2 million female workers in Ontario. Wilson referred to the proportional-value approach recently introduced which will ensure pay equity for another 245,000 women. Both emphasized the Ontario government's dedication and commitment to the acquisition of equality for all women.

None of the information in these responses is new to women. We are well aware of the government's record. It was tiresome to read again and again in other Liberal responses the same statistics featured in Peterson's and Wilson's letters.

One Liberal even used key phrases and paragraphs contained in Wilson's letter as his own reply!

What the PCs Said

Very few PC letters contained any personal initiatives. Some indicated confusion about who would give the party response. Andy Brandt, Mike Harris and Cam Jackson all were named.

In the end, **Cam Jackson**, PC Women's Issues Critic, gave

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WHAT THE PREMIER SAID: *Mr. Peterson commented on each of Council's points. Here's a quick rundown on our questions and his replies.*

1. Why doesn't the government combat anti-feminist attitudes?

RESPONSE: The government's wife assault and sexual assault initiatives recognize that attitudes must be changed to effect lasting change for all women. The emphasis placed on effective criminalization in these two areas is similar to the highly successful campaigns against drinking and driving.

2. Why is restricting pornography seen as an assault on freedom of expression?

RESPONSE: The power to legislate in that regard is within Federal jurisdiction. Enforcement of this legislation is the Province's responsibility and is carried out by "Project P" of the Ontario Provincial Police.

3. Why are there no anti-sexism programs?

There was no direct answer to this question.

4. Why is it not mandatory for judges to attend sensitization courses?

RESPONSE: The comprehensive approach taken in relation to wife assault and sexual assault views the attitudes and information held by judges as crucial to the success of the program. Information sessions have been provided and will continue to be offered on topics which promote equality for women in the courts.

5. Why are incidents of sexism in university and college campuses treated as "boyish pranks"?

RESPONSE: The Interministerial Committee on Sexual Assault is examining issues relating to sexual harassment on campus on behalf of this government. We are confident that its endeavour will assist colleges and universities to change these attitudes.

6. Why does Ontario's pay equity legislation cover only 10% of women workers?

RESPONSE: Pay equity legislation applies to 78% of female workers in Ontario who are under provincial jurisdiction and who work in establishments with more than 10 employees. The government is currently reviewing recommendations on extending pay equity to predominantly female establishments.

7. Why do women still earn only 64 cents of every dollar earned by a man?

There was no direct answer to this question.

8. Why are the only amendments being proposed to the Employment Standards Act in relation to women as mothers?

RESPONSE: The Employment Standards Act is being reviewed and changes concerning family leave matters will be introduced this spring.

9. Where are the aggressive advertising campaigns to promote the benefits of employment equity programs?

RESPONSE: Employment equity programs are central to the work of the Ontario Women's Directorate. Education programs targeting school age children and young people are intended to change attitudes and women's economic status.

10. Why do governments continue to institute regressive tax measures that keep women as economic victims?

RESPONSE: Taxation is a provincial as well as federal responsibility. The key issue is more a federal concern. Reforms proposed by the SARC Transitions report are intended to benefit low income women, especially those receiving social assistance. The implementation of the Transitions report is now underway.



Election Guide Insert: Soon it will be time to use that little pencil in the polling booth to vote for your candidate. This edition of *Council Update* contains an insert called **Raising the Issues, A Woman's Guide to the 1990 Ontario Election**. This is Council's third provincial election guide and it's packed with pointed and original questions to ask the candidates running for office in your area.

At press time, an election had not yet been called, but we went ahead and prepared this guide in anticipation of a fall election. Groups and individuals have Council's permission to reproduce the guide at will. Limited extra copies of the guide are also available by calling or writing Council office. (416-326-1840 - collect Ontario only).

Raising the Issues

A Woman's Guide to the 1990 Ontario Election

ABORTION

THE ISSUE IS:

Access to abortion services is unevenly distributed across the province.

FACT:

- Access to abortion is very restricted outside large urban areas of the province, especially in northern Ontario. In over 50% of Ontario counties, women needing abortions must travel outside their areas to obtain abortions.
- Hospital boards are not required to provide the service. Many have restrictive quotas. Operating room time is at a premium due to escalating health costs.
- Doctors outside large urban centres have stated recriminalization has made them less willing to provide abortion for fear of private prosecutions.

ASK:

What will your party do to ensure that all Ontario women have equal access to abortion services?

ADDICTION SERVICES

THE ISSUE IS:

Ontario has an inadequate number of addiction treatment centres for women and residents are being sent to the United States for treatment of drug/alcohol abuse. Existing treatment centres often are inaccessible to many women.

FACT:

- Over the past ten, years there has been a continuing increase in the number of women who are addicted to drugs/alcohol and are seeking treatment.
- On average, Ontario patients must wait four weeks for assessment and in many cases, up to a year for addiction treatment.
- Last year, almost 2,000 Ontario people received addiction treatment in the US. OHIP funds a maximum of \$800 daily per person for

treatment. Last year, the total cost of OHIP's funding for US services amounted to 20 million dollars. It is estimated this amount will double within the next year.

ASK:

What will you do to increase spending for women's addiction treatment centres in Ontario?

How will you ensure that all treatment centres are accessible to all women?



CHILDCARE

THE ISSUES ARE:

Ontario suffers from a critical shortage of childcare spaces. The cost of childcare programs often puts them out of reach for women, given their lower incomes. Childcare workers are underpaid.

FACT:

- Spending for childcare represents less than 1% of provincial government expenditures.
- Childcare programs are unevenly distributed across the province and are non-existent in some areas. There is very little infant/toddler and school age care.
- Programs are difficult to find in rural areas, for shift workers and in emergency situations.
- On average, childcare workers are paid about \$16,000 a year - less than zookeepers or parking lot attendants.

ASK:

What are your plans for implementation and expansion of high quality, affordable childcare in Ontario?

ENVIRONMENT

THE ISSUE IS:

Women are being exposed to poisonous compounds when they use sanitary protection products.

FACT:

- A chlorine bleaching process is used in the production of sanitary napkins and tampons - only to give the products a "pure white" appearance. The same process is also often used in paper towels, "disposable" diapers, coffee filters and milk cartons.
- Chlorine bleaching of pulp and paper products (such as sanitary napkins) generates dioxin, one of the most lethal poisons ever created. Measurable dioxin quantities remain in the paper products produced.
- Dioxins can enter our bodies by passing through the skin. The risks include: changes to the immune system, birth defects, reproductive problems, and production of cancers.
- Women have regular and direct contact with chlorine bleached sanitary protection products; yet, this issue has been neglected in the dioxin debate.

ASK:

Will your party call for a ban on chlorine bleaching in the production of all paper products?

EMPLOYMENT EQUITY

THE ISSUE IS:

Voluntary employment equity/affirmative action does not work.

FACT:

- Employment equity is the "new and improved" version of affirmative action. It is a program that includes visible minorities, people with disabilities and native people as well as women. The goal is simply to get fair and barrier-free participation in the workforce for these communities in hiring, promotion and training.

- Voluntary employment equity programs have been ineffective in securing the necessary changes.
- More than two-thirds of all working women are in low paying jobs in the clerical, service and sales sectors. Few women are in upper and middle management levels.
- Legislated employment equity recognizes that economic equality will only be achieved for women through regulation of inequitable practices in the labour market.

ASK:

How will your party ensure that employment equity programs meet the needs of **all** women, including visible minority women, Native women and women with disabilities?

Will your party support legislated employment equity?

HOUSING

THE ISSUE IS:

Ontario has a critical shortage of affordable housing.



FACT:

- No new housing initiatives were provided in the 1990 Ontario Budget.
- Women are particularly disadvantaged in the housing market because of their lower incomes.
- Many sole support mothers are forced to spend **more than 30%** of their income on rent (the level considered to be the maximum a household budget can withstand). This means they are unable to pay for essential items such as food, clothes and medicine for both themselves and their children.
- Housing is a right, not a luxury!

ASK:

What steps will your party take to increase the amount of affordable housing in Ontario?

PENSIONS

THE ISSUE IS:

Women receive inadequate pensions.

FACT:

- Pensions are earnings related. Low earnings mean low pensions. Women are usually employed in the lower paid occupations.
- Statistically, women live longer. Consequently, they need retirement income for a longer time. That income is, therefore, subject to greater erosion from inflation.

ASK:

Will your party ensure that the new Pensions Benefits Act will be amended to include inflation protection for pensions?

SUPERVISED ACCESS

THE ISSUE IS:

There are few safe, neutral places for supervised access to occur.

FACT:

- Courts are ordering supervised access where there is concern that the non-custodial parent may abduct the child or where there have been unproven allegations of abuse.
- Provincial government funding has been denied to some community agencies that have sought to provide a neutral location for supervised access; consequently, they have been forced to close.
- Neither the Community and Social Services Ministry nor the Attorney General Ministry is accepting responsibility for the provision of safe supervised access locations.

ASK:

What initiatives will you take to ensure that there are sufficient safe, neutral supervised access locations?

SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

THE ISSUES ARE:

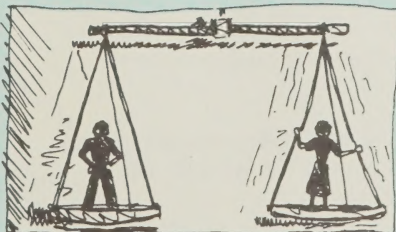
Women are not getting effective or prompt support enforcement services. The Support and Custody Orders Enforcement Office (SCOE) is underfunded and unresponsive to women seeking information about their cases. SCOE's caseload continues to grow, but staffing is not increased to expedite the support enforcement process.

FACT:

- The Support and Custody Orders Enforcement office (SCOE) was established in 1987 by the Ontario government to oversee court-ordered spousal and child support payments.
- In 1987, 85% of Ontario support Orders were in default. Currently, 77% of support Orders are in default.
- SCOE presently has over 70,000 cases on file. On average, SCOE receives 1,500 new cases each month.
- After registration of the Order with SCOE, it can take six weeks to open a file and collect the information necessary to commence enforcement.
- Women relying on SCOE are usually unable to speak personally with the Program Officer in charge of their file. Most are referred to a toll-free number, where the only available information is computer recorded.

ASK:

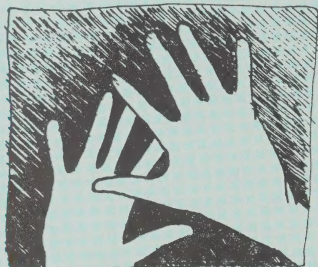
What steps will your party take to ensure the SCOE program adequately services all women in need of support enforcement.



VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

THE ISSUE IS:

Violence against women is widespread and women who are victims of violence often do not have access to appropriate services and programs.



FACT:

- One in eight women is physically abused by her partner. The highest incidence of battering occurs when women are economically and emotionally dependent - often when they are pregnant.
- One in four Canadian women is sexually assaulted at some time in her life.
- Women hesitate to report sexual assaults because they fear the judicial process, the attitudes of the police, and the perpetrator himself. For example, it is estimated that only 1% of date (acquaintance) rapes are reported.
- Services and programs often are not accessible for disabled women who are abused or sexually assaulted. Native women find that there are no shelters or crisis centres in their area. Native and immigrant women lack services sensitive to their cultural and language differences.

ASK:

What programs will your party put into place to address today's widespread violence against women?

How will you ensure all women who are victims of violence have access to the services and programs they require?

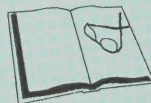
WOMEN'S STUDIES PROGRAMS

THE ISSUE IS:

Women's studies programs at Ontario universities are underfunded and are not given a high priority.

FACT:

- Many women are cross-appointed to women's studies, are overworked, have intense role model demands placed on them, and often must serve on several committees at once. These problems are a result of the low number of women teaching at the university level.
- At one prestigious Ontario university, the undergraduate women's studies program is not empowered to make its own appointments.
- As of 1989, only 2 of the thirteen Ontario universities with a women's studies program have a full-time co-ordinator.
- Limited funding for women's studies programs makes it difficult to expand, hire teaching faculty, bring in guest lecturers and ensure programs have their own offices and support staff.



ASK:

What steps will your party take to provide increased funding for women's studies programs?

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the Conservative party's most detailed reply. He pointed out that the PCs have raised women's issues to a priority status for discussion period in the Legislature. He mentioned their record of working closely with the Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres and the Ontario Association for Interval and Transition Houses (OAITH) in developing policies addressing the real needs of women.

What the NDP Said

Most NDP responses contained the same thought expressed in different ways. They strongly believe their party has taken many positions on behalf of Ontario's women. If only these could be implemented as government, continue the letters, women's status would greatly change.

Richard Johnston, NDP Women's Issues Critic, expressed his views for the state

of affairs raised by each of our questions. On the issue of anti-feminist attitudes, he had this to say: "Governments still have no consensus view on what constitutes sexism, whereas they have a clear view of racism". His letter also had the shortest and most direct answer to our pay equity question: "The government has broken its commitment of full pay equity made during the minority period of 1985 - 1987".

NOTE: If you'd like to know how your MPP responded, call or write us. We'll send you their letter. Please indicate your riding or your MPP's name.

* LAURELS to these MPPs for personal initiatives they have taken in their community on behalf of women:

* **Peter Adams, LIB., Peterborough** for helping to move along a local housing project for battered women.

* **Brad Nixon, LIB., York Mills** for his speech to male and female teachers on men and violence against other men, women and children.

* **Ron Kanter, LIB., St. Andrew - St. Patrick** for assisting a local women's group with their Justice Committee presentation.

* **Margaret Marland, P.C., Mississauga South,** for her annual fund-raiser on behalf of a local battered women's shelter.

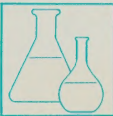
* **Jim Pollock, P.C., Hastings-Peterborough** for supporting the funding efforts of Safe Environments aimed at rural women.

* **Noble Villeneuve, PC Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry** for highlighting the problems faced by Ontario's rural and farm women.

* **Bob Mackenzie, NDP, Hamilton East** for proposing an increase in the minimum wage to a more acceptable level through a Private Members Bill.

* **Floyd Laughren, NDP, Nickel Belt** for his extensive comments in the Legislature on the feminization of poverty.

* **C.J. (Bud) Wildman, NDP, Algoma** for suggesting that "lawyers being considered for the Bench should be screened for sexist attitudes."



NRTs News

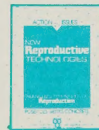
The Royal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies will conduct public hearings starting Sept. 11 in Whitehorse, Yukon.

The Commission was established by the federal government to consider the social, ethical, health, research, legal and economic implications of these technologies. The Commission hopes to hear a full range of views from women. Hearing locations and dates in Ontario are as follows:

Sudbury, Sept. 18; Ottawa, Sept. 19-20; Thunder Bay, Oct. 23; Toronto, Oct. 31/Nov 1; London, Nov. 2. Council plans to present a submission. Although the deadline has passed for obtaining a hearing appointment, written submissions will be accepted until December 31. But you must call now to advise your intention: **1-800-668-7060**. This toll free number also can be used to record your opinion. The Commission really wants to hear from women representing all walks of life, so call and tell them your opinion about NRTs.

If you haven't formed an opinion, or you're still unsure of where you stand, Council's workshop is an excellent tool to raise awareness on NRTs issues. It's easy to use and will help you understand some of the complexities involved with these technologies. It's free just for the asking.

We also have a reading list of printed resources on NRTs. Just call Council's main number if you'd like any of these items: 416-326-1840 (call collect in Ontario only).



The Council was established at arms-length from the government in 1973 and is in a unique position to question the government's direction and policies. Council's mandate is to advise government on matters pertaining to the achievement of economic, social, and legal equality for women through the Minister Responsible for Women's Issues; to respond to requests for advice and consultation from the Minister Responsible for Women's Issues; to hold public meetings with the purpose of stimulating public discussion and accessing the opinions of women, particularly in regions throughout Ontario; to identify specific areas requiring the attention of government and to recommend legislation and program changes. Members (15) are appointed by Cabinet on a part-time basis and reflect Ontario's geographical diversity.

EDITOR: LYDIA OLEKSYN

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Goodbye... to Council's Executive Officer, **Bridget**

Vianna. After 13 years, 4 Council presidents and 70 Council members, Bridget has left the Council to open her own travel agency in Toronto. She intends to combine women's issues and her love of travel by eventually organizing special feminist tours. (Which just proves what Bridget has always said: Once a feminist, always a feminist!) Council will miss Bridget's incisive thinking, enthusiasm, and vast knowledge of women's issues. We wish her much success in her new venture.



Hello... to three new Council members.

Margot Dallaire (Sudbury), is Dean of the Arts Appliqués Department at Cambrian College. She is interested in education issues,

particularly continuing education for francophone women. She previously taught math and french at the College and has published two text books on math.

Sarah Melvin (Sioux Lookout), is the health program co-ordinator of the Windigo Tribal Council. She is especially interested in native women's issues. She believes that training and employment opportunities for all women in northern Ontario are inadequate.

Both these appointments continue until June 27, 1992.

Carol Anne Sceviour, (Toronto), is Council's newest appointment - to June 1991. She is the Human Rights Director Responsible for Women's Issues at the Ontario Federation of Labour. Employment and pay equity are just two of her concerns. She is also actively involved with several local women's groups.

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